

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 NEA-10

/074 W

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R 181026Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2071

INFO SECDEF

CNO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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SECDEF FOR ISA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, PINT, MOPS, UK, SF

SUBJECT: SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT TERMINATED

1. IN KEEPING WITH ITS ELECTION PLATFORM AND THE LABOR PARTY MANIFESTO, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ON 16 JUNE THE TERMINATION OF THE 1955 SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT. THE AGREEMENT WHICH EMBODIED THE PRINCIPLES OF NAVAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UK AND SOUTH AFRICA HAD BEEN IN OPERATION SINCE 1955 AND WAS BROUGHT TO A CLOSE JUST SHORT OF ITS TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY. FROM NOW ON JOINT TRAINING EXERCISES BETWEEN THE ROYAL NAVY AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN NAVY WILL CEASE AS WILL THE REGULAR USE BY THE ROYAL NAVY OF THE EXTENSIVE SIMONSTOWN BASE FACILITIES.

2. THE END OF THIS AGREEMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN THE CAUSE OF POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT TO SUCCESSIVE LABOR GOVERNMENTS, WILL EVOKE SOME REGRET IN THE ROYAL NAVY--BRINGING TO AN END AS IT DOES A 169-YEAR NAVAL ASSOCIATION WITH SIMONSTOWN--AND IT WILL CAUSE RELIEF AND SOME RE-

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JOICING WITHIN THE LEFT WING OF BRITISH POLITICS AND SOME

NOSTALGIC LAMENTATION ON THE RIGHT. IN ANY EVENT, THE LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS OPENLY EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE MILITARY VALUE OF SIMONSTOWN IS NO LONGER WORTH THE POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT THE AGREEMENT CAUSED TO THE LEFT. CERTAINLY, THE REOPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL AND THE REDUCTION OF THE ROYAL NAVY'S INDIAN OCEAN COMMITMENTS DIMINISH SIMONSTOWN'S IMPORTANCE TO THE BRITISH.

3. THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE CLOSURE OF SIMONSTOWN, ANNOUNCED THROUGH THE EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN MODS MASON AND BOTHA AND BETWEEN UK AMBASSADOR BOTTOMLEY AND SOUTH AFRICA SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOURIE, MEANS THAT THE POST OF SENIOR BRITISH NAVAL OFFICER, SOUTH AFRICA, WILL LAPSE AND ACCORDING TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE, BRITISH WARSHIPS WILL ONLY CONTINUE TO CALL OCCASIONALLY AT SIMONSTOWN QUOTE ON A CUSTOMER BASIS WHEN IT IS OPERATIONALLY NECESSARY TO DO SO END QUOTE.

4. THE CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT HAS NOT GENERATED ANY HEATED POLITICAL OUTBURSTS, AND IN THE PUBLIC MEDIA IT HAS BEEN TREATED QUIETLY AND STRAIGHTFORWARDLY.

RICHARDSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY TERMINATION, SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT, NAVAL EXERCISES, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON09290
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750212-0213
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750639/aaaabjdi.tel
Line Count: 84
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT TERMINATED
TAGS: MARR, PINT, MOPS, UK, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006